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**Statement by Her Excellency Gabriela Matecná
Minister for Agriculture and Rural Development of the Slovak Republic**

**40th FAO Conference
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Mr. Chairperson,

Excellencies,

Ladies and Gentlemen,

Climate change as a phenomenon of the 21st century is one of the most serious challenges facing our world today. It seriously threatens our environment, agriculture, food security and the way of life. Since climate change is caused by human activity we can fight it only if we change human activities and behavior.

Let us not forget the climate – conflict nexus and the disgraceful consequences humanity faces today with four looming famines affecting 20 million people. But there is always a hope. A hope in the form of the new global development agenda adopted 2 years ago with the aim to end poverty, protect our planet, and ensure prosperity for all, leaving no one behind and reaching first to those furthest behind.

Recognizing the need for the urgent action the landmark Paris Agreement entered into force less than a year after its adoption. Slovakia was the fourth EU country that ratified it and constantly works towards meeting its objectives.

We can all agree that finding common solutions to fighting climate change is not an easy task. But agriculture definitely needs to be a part of the solution and should always feature prominently in all discussions related to climate change.

Further investment in agricultural research is a precondition for finding new innovative ways to develop sustainable agriculture that is economically viable, climate-friendly, safeguarding limited natural resources and at the same time producing sufficient, safe and nutritious food.

Approximately 50 percent of total emissions in Slovakia are produced by companies in the Emission Trading System and only 8% origin in agriculture. Slovakia was successful in stabilizing greenhouse gas emissions over the years 2000-2008, with its economy growing rapidly at the same time. As a result Slovakia had the largest decline of the energy and carbon intensities of the economy among the OECD countries.

Ladies and Gentlemen,

Allow me to highlight the crucial role of forests in food and agriculture production, and in particular in conservation and restoration of carbon sinks.

The Slovak Republic is proud to be rich in forests that cover almost half of its territory. Sustainable forest management has a long history in our conditions. We have been using forest management plans for more than 250 years. Every year, our forest management allows growing wood and carbon stock in above and below-ground biomass, deadwood and humus and stabilizes its stock in soils.

In the last decade our forests have been threatened by strong winds followed by overpopulation of insect agents in protected localities where active forest management is not allowed.

Based on this experience, I would like to encourage you to take a very sensitive and science based decisions when not allowing the foresters to revitalize damaged forests.

To conclude, allow me to appreciate the valuable work of FAO in supporting countries to be able to mitigate and better adapt to the impacts of climate change in the agricultural and food sectors.